

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-3 are pending in the application.

The Examiner has offered rejections against Claims 1-3. The rejections are respectfully traversed.

The Examiner has rejected Claims 1 and 2, under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,627,80 to Stephens. The Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection. The Examiner has presented Stephens as disclosing "a brace bar comprising a narrow portion having a cross-section with a profile of which at least one side extends vertically upward to a position of a predetermined height, thus forming a lower base part (the base portion shown in Fig. 6B), and is bent inward at said position toward a center of the brace bar, and, thereafter, extends upward while being inclined at a predetermined inclination angle to form a tapered upper part (Fig. 6B)." The Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner's representation of the Stephens patent. Stephens teaches instead a musical brace "having reduced mass and more flexibility [wherein] [a] standard brace having scalloped ends may be modified . . . by introducing apertures of circular or other shape crosswise through the brace, thus forming voids therealong thereby reducing weight and reducing stiffness . . . [or] an I-beam . . . [or] a curvilinear brace having a flat base, concave side and a rounded apex having circular apertures along the length of the thin center portion." (See Abstract; Figs. 4A, 5A, 5C, 6A, 6B.) Stephens does not teach that after the narrow portion is "bent inward at said position toward a center of the brace bar" that it "thereafter extends upward while being inclined at a predetermined inclination angle to form a tapered upper part." Instead

the Stephens patent, at best, and as set forth in the Fig. 6B as referenced by the Examiner, depicts a brace that is bent inward at the position passing the base part and is then shaped with concave curvature ending in a rounded upper section. Clearly the Stephens reference does not depict nor suggest an *inclination angle* nor a *tapered upper part* as set forth in Claim 1 of the present application, and therefore the remaining dependent claims 2 and 3. As a result, the Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the rejection and place the claims in line for allowance.

The Examiner has rejected Claim 3 under 35 U.S.C. (a) as obvious over Stephens in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,406,874 to Winchel. The Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection. In view of the arguments listed above, the combination of the references cited does not disclose the entire apparatus as claimed. Further, there is no teaching or suggestion in either reference to combine the references. Additionally, with respect to Winchel, the reference, related to a melamine sheet guitar, depicts in its Figs. 7 and 8, cribbing that is essentially L-shaped with concave curvature on the outer-facing side and curve-easing cuts into the cribbing at intervals along the length of the cribbing strip. Winchel, therefore, suffers from the same difference from the present application's invention as does Stephens, that the "angle" referenced by the Examiner is instead a concave curve. Therefore, every limitation of Applicant's present claim 3 cannot be present in the combination of the cited art references. As a result, the Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the rejection and place the claims in line for allowance.

The Applicant has attempted to be fully responsive to the Office Action and believes the claims should now be in line for allowance. However, if the Examiner feels that it would be helpful, the undersigned would welcome a telephone call in order to discuss any outstanding issues and to expedite placement of the application into condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Becker".

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